

Department of State – US Embassy Kabul Public Affairs Section

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan
Funding Opportunity Title: **Young Engagement in the Future of Afghanistan leading up to the 2014 Afghan Election**
Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: **SCAKAB-12-AW-020-SCA-08142012**
Deadline for Applications: **September 10, 2012**
CFDA 19.501- Public Diplomacy Programs for Afghanistan and Pakistan

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is open to all Afghan organizations or companies with direct experience in Afghanistan's working with Afghan youth.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Not Applicable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact Pedro Palugyai, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:
Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Proposals (RFP). PAS Kabul invites all eligible organizations to submit a proposal for the organization of youth engagement regarding the 2014 Afghan Presidential Elections, producing local group discussions both in person and online with Afghan youth (both male and female), highlighting the importance of the upcoming Afghan Presidential Elections and leading discussions on what they view as the future of Afghanistan. The target age group is age 17-24. These discussions will take place throughout the year, leading up to the 2014 elections, with the goal of fostering credible and inclusive elections by emphasizing their importance of youth engagement in the process and their involvement in determining the future of Afghanistan. A core part of the program is to link youth through connection technology from one province to another, in fostering a sense of a national debate of key issues. The intent is both to explain the significance of these historic elections and to increase understanding and encourage participation among Afghan youth, thereby expressing confidence in the future of Afghanistan and the peaceful transfer of power.

The Recipient will carry out discussion groups across all regions of Afghanistan as well as lead an online forum. These can be in a variety of formats – including Town Halls, and discussion groups connecting youth via skype or other technology. The discussions should take place in a neutral public space, for example a university or community center. They must include a moderator to lead the discussion group and can include experts who will discuss the critical and historic nature of the upcoming elections and encourage the discussion and debate of critical issues for this generation of young people. The audience should focus on young people from ages 17-24 and have representation of both women and men. These fora may not be platforms for, or debates between, presidential candidates, or their surrogates. All locations and venues, panelists and moderators will be agreed upon in advance by the grantee and PAS. PAS places a premium on geographic diversity and local participation, particularly the involvement of women.

The successful applicant will have extensive experience both in creating and managing debate and discussion groups with Afghan youth audiences. Besides fostering a sense of excitement and commitment to the future of Afghanistan through the upcoming elections, these sessions should also impart a basic understanding of how democracy is enshrined in the Afghan constitution, how it fits with Afghan traditions, and the nuts and bolts of democracy and voting in Afghanistan. After these sessions, the young Afghans should be able to explain to their parents, teachers, and peers not only how Afghan elections and democracy work, but also why it personally important to them that they vote and encourage others to do so. The sessions should also result in the highlighting and identification of key issues of importance to Afghan youth that would become part of the national debate.

The Recipient will professionally record a certain number of the debates and discussions for final editing of a program to air on national radio, in Dari and Pashtun. The intent of

this broadcast (or broadcasts) is to extend the reach of these discussions further than their immediate participants. The program must include, at a minimum: a primer on Afghan elections, the Afghan constitution, and how they fit into Afghan traditions, and testimonials from youth in various regions on why voting and this election is important to them and their region. The successful applicant will need to demonstrate how it will broadcast the finished productions to all corners of Afghanistan via radio and how it intends to brand and market these series, both regionally and nationally, to draw listeners to this critical discussion with Afghan youth.

The Recipient should also develop a debate and discussion social media outreach plan via Facebook and other methods in both Dari and Pashtun. This site would promote certain topics important to the youth audience and encourage debate and discussion both before and after the personal engagement venues. PAS is especially interested in how this might involve a key potential social media audience in the universities. One possible social media program might involve putting the video of a university discussion group or Skype session online (on both Facebook and YouTube) and encourage the social media audience to exchange messages with the participants on Facebook. The youth who participated in the discussion group would interact with them and answer their questions, thereby expanding the reach of the program and building social media/blogger capacity. The grantee should outline the development and implementation of this side and online discussion forum. How will topics be selected, who will manage the online discussion groups and metrics to evaluate the site impact? PAS will also be interested in how the grantee will market this program to potential social media audiences.

The grantee must develop key themes that resonate with the young participants so that they will see how these historic elections affect their lives and this will encourage them want to participate and vote. How can they as young Afghans participate in the process and highlight the value of their input in the electoral process? To ensure that young Afghans understand their own democratic process and can explain it to others, the grantee will also develop a basic primer on elections, the Afghan constitution, and how this all fits into Afghan traditions.

A successful proposal will include:

- A detailed budget and accompanying budget narrative for the program;
- A detailed discussion group schedule that will provide a timeline events and provide detail on how it will air the discussion groups to best effect via radio including production tasks: selection of the provinces, venues, moderators, panelists, and the schedule for vetting these recommendations through PAS; all pre-production tasks; selection of themes and messages for each discussion group and schedule for vetting these recommendations through PAS; all post-production tasks; the branding and marketing plan and the schedule for vetting this through PAS; and the post-air evaluation plan and analysis.
- A detailed social media plan for the website, Facebook, or other online discussion group to support the overall engagement and how the grantee will reach out to potential audiences.

- Resumes of key personnel, including lead producer for the discussion groups and debates;
- Initial recommendations for the location of discussion groups **and the rationale for your recommendations**, suggested venues, and potential moderators and panelists;
- Discussion of how the program will encourage youth participation;
- Discussion of methods that will engage young people and give them confidence that their voices will be heard.
- Discussion of how to reach the widest possible audience in Afghanistan, as well as specific provincial/regional audiences, including a branding and marketing plan;
- Discussion of why your organization is uniquely positioned to carry out the youth discussion groups, including similar past productions, staff, and assets; your experience with utilization of connection technologies (skype and other) to link groups across Afghanistan;
- Other creative ideas are welcome on how to promote discussion, debate and follow-on from the program.

II. BACKGROUND

Objectives

Proposals should address four distinct activities:

- Afghan unity and a positive future for Afghanistan through democratic elections;
- The role the of young people in fostering credible and inclusive elections;
- Developing discussion forum for youth audiences on issues of concern to them for the future of Afghanistan; and
- The importance of these historic elections for all regions of Afghanistan and what each region stands to gain from them.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is open to all Afghan organizations or companies with direct experience in young engagement via programs and online discussion groups. The organization should have the ability to record, produce and distribute taped discussions via the radio, and a proven track record of success implementing projects in Afghanistan (see “Eligibility” on page 1).

Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. However, applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-U.S. Government sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and will be considered to show greater cost effectiveness.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 12 months

Award Amount: The award ceiling is set at \$500,000.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit a complete proposal with a detailed budget electronically using Grants.gov or submit proposals to PAS Kabul directly at: KabulPDProposals@state.gov. If proposals are submitted to KabulPDProposals@state.gov, please include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the subject line of the email.

Thorough instructions on the Grants.gov application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726. For questions about this solicitation, contact Pedro Palugyai, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:

Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before September 10, 2012, 11:59 p.m. Kabul time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

All applicants utilizing Grants.gov must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register: (1) Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711; (2) Register with Central Contractor Registry (CCR); (3) Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (4) Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your CCR registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your CCR registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

Proposals may not exceed 10 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 6 below. The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):

This form can be found on-line at:

http://fa.statebuy.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the project to be undertaken, expected timeline, and cost.

Section 3 – Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project. The steps involved -- from design to live event to broadcast to monitoring and evaluation -- should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. This section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 4 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with live event and radio production in Afghanistan, experience working with Afghan government institutions, and the organizational experience and background in Afghanistan related to the proposed activities. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project.

Section 5 - Appendices:

The concept paper submission must include two appendices, with a third, optional appendix to be submitted at the discretion of the applicant. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget (Required)** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget may not exceed 1 page in length.
- (b) **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff person, such as the Project Director. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.

- (c) **Letters of Intent or Other Proof of Ability to Broadcast (Required)** – Applicants that do not have costs budgeted for broadcasting or are not themselves broadcasters must include letter(s) or intent from radio broadcasters, outlining the broadcasters’ commitment to air the content free of charge. Applicants who do have broadcasting fees included in the budget must submit supporting documentation/pro-formas to support the cost structure included in the budget.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of Department of State and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFP.

- **Project Goals/Implementation Plan (40 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities’ effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the stated need for monitoring and evaluation, relevance of the goals and objectives, and feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion.
- **Organizational Capability (40 points):** Proposals should demonstrate the ability to develop and produce content and programming broadcast in Dari and Pashto. Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals.
- **Appendices (20 points):**
 - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the Budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant’s understanding of the allowable cost principles established by OMB Circular A-122, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.

- **Resume:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected Project Director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
- **Letters of Intent or Other Proof of Ability to Broadcast:** The review panel will consider the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with local organizations. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of local organizations to participate in the effort, and that all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified if their proposal has been selected for award within 30 days after the submission deadline. PAS Kabul will provide information at the point of notification about any modification to the proposal or plan of work that will be required to finalize the cooperative agreement.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.